

ARTICLE

Are You a Great Leader? Maybe. Maybe Not. But You Definitely Can Be!

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Summary

- ❑ The key to successful and effective leadership isn't toughness or even brilliance; it comes down to two words: emotional intelligence.
- ❑ Being able to diffuse or minimize conflict, and motivate others to do the same, is a skill you can utilize daily and in a multitude of environments.
- ❑ To give effective feedback and criticism, you need to be open to it and be able to receive it, so it is essential that you are able to receive it with a growth mindset.



What does it mean to be a leader? A pervasive misnomer (one that transcends generation, industry, and region) is that a good leader is someone who is decisive, hardworking, and tough. I don't disagree that these *can* be good qualities in a leader. But in isolation, such qualities are not enough to lead effectively nor are they qualities that define a *great* leader. The key to successful and effective leadership isn't toughness or even brilliance; it comes down to two words: emotional intelligence. Let me explain.

Think about the people throughout your life who you would follow through fire; those who can motivate you to go that extra mile—anyone from a teacher, a coach, a parent, a supervisor, or even a friend. Sometimes that person might motivate you through fear, but I would expect that many of us will identify the one person who really saw you and took the time to know you and know what you needed, who treated you with respect and demanded the same treatment, who made the hard decisions and gave you the agency to make such decisions too, who was comfortable expressing emotion and acknowledged your emotions, and even encouraged you to express your emotions, who was direct with feedback and criticism, and who forgave freely.

All these qualities exemplify a person who leads with emotional intelligence. Why does this matter? Because we all want to work more efficiently and have our teams be more efficient. Because we want to enjoy work and see the fun in it, even when the work can sometimes be anything but fun. Because humans are complex beings and conflict between us is inevitable. Being able to diffuse or minimize conflict, and motivate others to do the same, is a skill you can utilize daily and in a multitude of environments. If you even just *try* to amplify your emotional intelligence, you will find that your subordinates will respect you and work harder because they know they can trust you and that you care about them. You will find that your partners will respect and listen to you more because they always know where they stand with you and they know you are thoughtful and respectful of others. You will also find that you and your team are more content at work because you have fostered an environment of mutual support and caring. In other words, in the various facets of your life, the complex humans involved will work more effectively as a team because of the environment *YOU* foster as the great leader that *YOU* are.

Have I piqued your interest? If so, take the first step today.

Start by looking within to get to know yourself better. I cannot understate how a good therapist can be essential here. You can improve your sense of self and understand what motivates you, as well as work through issues from your own life that may drive your present actions or reactions. To give effective feedback and criticism, you need to be open to it and be able to receive it, so it is essential that you are able to receive it with a growth mindset. On the topic of feedback, when giving it directly—which you *MUST* do—remember

that your ultimate goal is to be helpful. Is yelling at or humiliating the receiver of the feedback helpful? NO. When you receive feedback, what helps you receive it better? Most likely it is helpful when you know that the person giving the feedback cares about their relationship with you. There is almost always going to be something good you can say, so start there!

This process may seem hard at first, but you'll be surprised how easy it really is once you start down this road. Know that you don't need to be perfect and are a work in progress. Own any criticism and let it drive you to be better. Be open and willing to change. Be direct and respectful. Be transparent and vulnerable. Be a great leader and inspire others to be great too!

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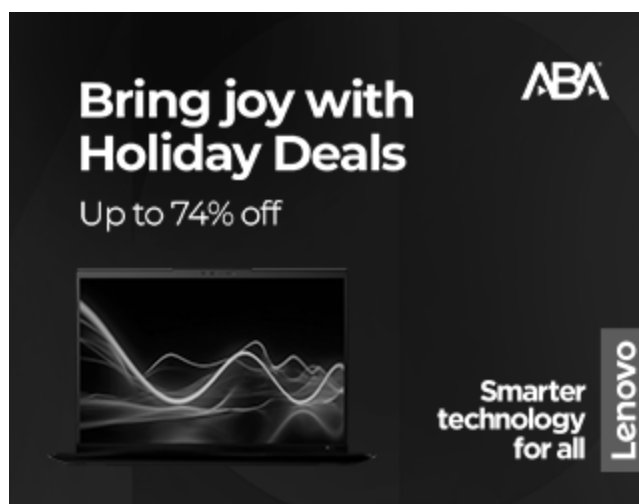
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The advertisement features a dark background with white text and graphics. At the top left, the text reads 'Bring joy with Holiday Deals' in a large, bold font, followed by 'Up to 74% off' in a smaller font. In the top right corner is the ABA logo. In the bottom right corner, the Lenovo logo is displayed vertically, with the slogan 'Smarter technology for all' positioned to its left. In the center of the advertisement, there is a glowing, abstract graphic that resembles a stylized wave or a series of connected points, possibly representing a network or data flow.

